



MIDDLESEX COMMUNITY COLLEGE

[Proposed H.B. No. 5618](#) AN ACT AUTHORIZING BONDS FOR CAPITAL PROJECTS
AT MIDDLESEX COMMUNITY COLLEGE. (HED)

Testimony by Jonathan Morris, Ph. D.

Interim Chair of the Science, Allied Health and Engineering Division
Middlesex Community College
Before the Higher Education Committee
February 14, 2013

Madam Co-Chairs and members of the committee;

I am Jonathan Morris. Today I will speak in support of the Proposed House Bill 5618 *An Act Authorizing Bonds for Capital Projects at Middlesex Community College*.

I am a resident of Middletown. I currently hold the position of Chair of the Science, Allied Health and Engineering Division at Middlesex Community College. For the past 9 years my permanent appointment has been at Manchester Community College where I am a tenured full-Professor. But, before that I worked for 10 years as the Coordinator of the Biotechnology Program at Middlesex Community College. So, I consider it extremely fortunate, that after a time away, I have been given an opportunity to return to Middlesex at a time when the college is being renewed under its new leadership.

My work history puts me in the unique position of being employed at one of the best funded Community College in Connecticut where beautiful new buildings are added every 3-4 years and being employed at a college that has not benefitted from a new building in more than 20 years.

In the past decade or so there have been numerous rounds of funding by the State in response to the increasing demand for community college education in Connecticut. Every community college in the state, except for MxCC and Asnuntuck, has benefited from these new construction projects. The last new building at MxCC was completed before 1992. Most of the buildings on campus actually date back to the 1970's. These were built as temporary structures that were supposed to be replaced within 10-20 years. After 40 years of use these buildings are showing wear and tear and sorely need to be replaced or at least upgraded.

This lack of new construction on campus means that the cities of Middletown, Meriden and the surrounding communities have not had the same opportunity to provide convenient, accessible and affordable education as other communities in Connecticut. This impacts our local workforce

development and limits educational choices for our residents, especially those who can least afford to travel or pay for more expensive educations.

MxCC students and workers repeatedly face the challenges caused by being left behind in the modernization and expansion of our state's colleges.

- For example, students who have means to travel distances have had to drive to other parts of the State because Middlesex was too full for them to enroll in classes.
- Students without transportation are out of luck, their education being delayed or discontinued.
- My Division is busting at the seams. In part due to grant funded positions, our Division will be adding 7 new positions this year, yet we lack classroom and office space to effectively accommodate this addition staff. As an example, I have had to squeeze two new full-time Ph. Ds. into a cubicle designed for one person.
- Like me, employees have left MxCC to work at other colleges where there are state-of-the-art labs and spacious classrooms, where there is modern educational technology and interesting spaces for students and faculty to congregate.

This is a loss for our students; it is a loss for our towns.

With the funding provided by this bill an expanded and modernized MxCC will become a more effective catalyst for economic development in our region. The college will bring expanded educational opportunities to our citizens and this will lead to the growth of a more highly skilled workforce in our service area.

Thank you for this chance to address your committee regarding this opportunity to help MxCC. Your support for this Bill will put our college in a position where it can more effectively drive Connecticut's economic growth by providing affordable education to greater numbers of our citizens.